1: Dieterlen
561

Bambara FA8

/For data on age-groups which are associated with the Kworè and Komo societies, see category 794. --Analyst/

831 lines or dots depending upon the sex of those who used them. Thus,
801 women marked their spindles with four lines whereas men twisted three threads on their shuttles.

826 On the metaphysical level, man's body, "the seed of the world," is identified with the cereal grain. The Bambara separate cereal
824 grains into seven parts, corresponding to a division of the human
812 organs into seven groups (1). Man and grain are one and identical in

1. The divisions of the grain are as follows: kungu, "little beard of millet," involucre; fara dye, "white bark," glume and glumales; fara fi, "black bark," bran and protein aceous bark; fara mugu, "farinaceous bark" (which corresponds to a milky diastatic zone); mugu dunta, "flour for eating," starch; kolo dye, "white bone," embryo; kise de, "son of grain," the micropyle from which the rootlet issues at the time of germination. The classification of organs in relation to these divisions is under study. We thank M. Pitot of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire for the identification of the parts of the grain corresponding to the native divisions. In certain villages, grains
[782] undergo a process of hulling and the determined elements only are used in the making up of the ritually offered millet mash.

their substance. On the other hand, the basic foods, that is, the eight principal cereals, are symbolically present in the collarbones (kolo kalanjiri, or ka kolo). Man carries within him his subsistance, and its location reflects the person's general condition (2). As proof
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2. See p. 53, n. 2.

of /72/ man's spiritual integrity, these grains leave him when he is in a state of impurity. He is then drained of his substance and subsistence. Thepurpose of purification is to reestablish this wholeness.

812 Moreover, the bonds which unite the whole person, body and
●561 spiritual principles, to the cosmos, are made clear by the fact that

812 561 man's life passes through seven successive ages corresponding to the seven skies, the seven earths, the seven waters, and the seven stages of millet growth. The seven ages are: bilakoro, "an uncircumcised person"; kemɛkoro "a circumcised person of the last age grade"; tyebalɛ, literally, a big man; masalɛ, literally, a successful person; makoroba, literally, an elderly person; madesalɛ, literally, a person who cannot succeed, an old man; mabalɛ, an impotent old man.

812 561 796 These bonds are also confirmed annually for everybody in the course of the ritual called "the renewal of the year." By renewing the cardinal points, the Bambara add to the strength of these poles of attraction which are responsible for maintaining things within themselves and with respect to each other. At the same time they proceed to a "revival of the body and soul," including all from the youngest to the oldest. For the year to come, they take a fresh breath, a new life, and submit the body to internal and external purifications, making it adequate to fulfill its role.

Effects of Death on the Person

761 The first effect of death is to dissociate the elements that make up the person. The religious practices, imbued with respect for these elements, aim at organizing their preservation in order that they may not be lost to the deceased, to society, and finally, to Faro who controls life and assures the survival of souls.

The dya remains in the water where it will be kept until the birth of a child. But the ni, which escapes from the body with the last breath, is watched for by the head of the family who catches it and carries it to an altar. As we have seen above, it will return to animate the dya of the child who will inherit the deceased's spiritual principles, leaving behind it on the altar, a kind of exuvia, mana or folo, as a sign of the deceased's sojourn on earth.

The tere becomes transformed at death; liberated from the body, it becomes nyama which escapes and which may sometimes attack the living. Proof of this is the fear aroused by the sight of a corpse. /73/ It would seem that the tere's combination of strength and character is expressed by the activity of the nyama; but it is really dangerous only in the case of violent death (the murder of a man or an animal). In this case the nyama attacks the responsible party. If death is natural, the nyama, like the ni, is directed by the relatives and placed on the family altar (pembele) in the course of the

passing before his door and thus empty him of his nyama. The man grows thin and poor. The griot may bring about his death with evil words, their nyama attacking the heart, the chest, then the entire body of the victim.

The griot's power over the person he flatters becomes more involved and varies according to what he is reciting. If he recites the burudyu several times, if he speaks at length of the ancestors, their nyama enters his mouth and is added to his own, thus reinforcing the power of the word. Thus, when the griot recites a barama without receiving payment, his nyama attacks the person spoken to. If this offense is repeated and if the burudyu is recited, the man is forced to pay if he does not wish to be attacked by the much more formidable nyama of the ancestors.

In these various situations, the tere of the person flattered intervenes: if it is good, it fights to defend the person, but if it is weak or wicked, it joins the ancestral forces and the person is doubly threatened.

The recitation is always made by the griot before a witness so that his action will be more binding and make the miser lose face. On the other hand, a man who pays the griot generously is looked after by the latter who sings of his generosity on all occasions and announces the sum he has received; often he does not hesitate to exaggerate the total amount received if he can hope to profit by doing so (1).

1. If the griot knows that the wealthy man he is addressing is miserly, he rubs his teeth with roots which he knows has the power to make his words even more effective.

Sometimes a man reaches a secret agreement with the griot in order to gain prestige. He publicly gives him a considerable sum, part of which the griot returns the following day as agreed upon. The gift is so generous that none can surpass it.

This practice is particularly apparent at the time of marriage. The men of the same age grade as the groom outdo each other in their gifts to the griot. The one who has given most passes for the most generous. Sometimes the griot invents a new barama on the spot even though he does not know the device.

Pottery

323 The ancient Bambara did not know about pottery. At the time they
773 lived in caverns, they let their meat dry in the sun on the rocks. Next, they manufactured receptacles by hollowing out stones, of which certain unused millstones /125/ seen today are copies. When they had invented fire, they cooked meat by spitting it with skewers of green sunzun wood and by exposing it to flames and live coals.

Later, they shaped and dried vessels of coarse clay, imitating the hollowed-out stones. One of these vessels, which was exposed to the fire in order to cook the food it contained, was observed to have changed color, hardened, and become more resistant. In this way they developed the technology of making pottery at a time when they still had only wooden tools.

323 Since this technology is related to the invention of fire, the wives
326 of the blacksmiths were the first to practice it.(1). Today they form
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1. The different techniques of pottery making were supposedly revealed to the village of Gwondougou (see p. 155) by the Soba spirits of the crossroads.

a society (tô) in each village and own many altars entrusted to the care of the head of the society.

The principal altar, the dyo kala, which represents the thumb of the potters, is made of wood carved in the shape of a thumb and engraved with symbolic lines. To learn her trade, each initiate is lightly touched on the head with it. The head of the society spills her blood over it in the case of a broken taboo affecting the society. But its principal function is to be the receptacle for the spiritual forces of the group. upon a member's death, this object, placed upon the corpse, gathers up the soul which escapes from the body.

[252] In certain villages, the pots with holes, ñintin, used for cooking couscous, are placed near the village upon the pile of ashes from the great hearth where the pots are fired (see Pl. IV, a); they also serve as altars at the time when the potters are consecrated.

323 Since her childhood the potter, following the example of her
561 seniors, practices kneading and shaping little pots, bokofani (literal-
575 ly, little clay pots). After excision at the required age, she joins

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[561] the society during a public consecration which she receives with several others, the group forming an age grade.

After an apprenticeship of seven days, the potters decide upon the date of the ceremony which is celebrated at the firing spot near the altars. Each member provides a hairpin (bandigi), which represents her on this occasion, and the skin of a hedgehog. Disrobed in front of the assembled villages, each girl is seated in turn on the altar as an aged woman examines her genitals to verify her virginity and the proper execution of the excision.

/126/ If the young girl is no longer a virgin, she is publicly de-
[831] clared dangadé (literally, bastard) and finds herself automatically excluded from the society; she will never be able to receive the potter's title. Otherwise, a proclamation is made immediately to the great joy of the public. If the excision has not been judged
[304] sufficient, the patient is given the title of potter after having submitted to a new operation performed in such a way that the blood runs over the pottery (1).

1. If excision is not possible, the operation takes the form of a wound inflicted with the hedgehog's skin (see p. 243).

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867 An old woman then appears seated before members of the age grade and instructs them. She tells of the origin and history of pottery, apprising them of the difficulties of the craft such as fatigue, burns, etc. She teaches them patience towards the client and enumerates the rules which will have to be observed during their lifetime: to be pure in heart and to hate no one; not to undertake work shortly after having had sexual relations; to work in silence; to respect all taboos in general.

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431 She then makes a libation of karite oil on the altar and rubs it on the bodies of the initiates who must run their tongues over the pottery, thus making an oath. Sheep, brought by the initiates' parents, are then killed by having their throat cut over the hearth in the name of the potters while the elders of the society present to the initiates gifts consisting of several pots which they will sell for profit while waiting for their first work. This gift is moreover a sign of adoption.

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784 The utensils are made with clay, mbogo pasa, taken from the bottom of the watercourse or along the river's edge; they belong to

794 or Koma/," Outremer, 1929; H. Labouret, Les Manding et leur langue.

794 The Komo
561 society, komo tyew (literally, men, people of the Komo) is composed of all circumcised men, with the exception of the griot who may under no condition become members, after an initiation performed according to the age grade, the members of which are called tonyaw. The hierarchy is rigorously respected: an earlier age grade will always be ahead of the one that follows it in all circumstances of secular or religious life. The Komo recognizes a chief, komotigi (literally, master or owner of the Komo) who preferably belongs to the caste of blacksmiths and whose function is hereditary. The son automatically assumes command of the age grade which follows that of his father. Upon the latter's death, he changes his age grade and becomes the head of his father's. In the case where the owner of the Komo dies
[304] young and his eldest son, who is to inherit the office, is not yet circumcised, he is made to undergo the operation in the night following the death, and on the following day is proclaimed chief (1).

1. In La Religion Bambara, L. Tauxier points out that in some villages the chief of the Komo exercises his power only during a seven-year term. At the end of seven years an election takes place and the function is not hereditary.

794 Because of the importance of his functions, the chief of the Komo
784 is made to respect a great number of taboos. In particular he may not penetrate into the sanctuary if he has not been chaste during the past twenty-four hours. If the taboo is broken, he must warn the men of his age grade and sacrifice two roosters upon the altars to purify himself. His wife is initiated (for she is apt to see certain ritual
[562] objects generally hidden from women because of her intimacy with the chief), but she is not present at any of the ceremonies to which only the members are /144/ admitted. If she commits adultery she
[837] brings about her husband's exclusion from the society, not only as chief but also as member.

794 The chief is often assisted by two elders belonging to his age grade,
561 whose advice he seeks in all cases concerning the community. In addition, he is always helped by young initiates. If one of these

794 distinguishes himself through diligence, obedience, and skill, he may
561 occasionally, if the elders so decide, be promoted to a more advanced age grade than his own and thus find himself on an equal footing with his elders.

794 The responsibilities of the Komo chief are considerable. He is the guardian of the altars which, as we shall later see, contain all the spiritual forces of the society; he is the only one able to manipulate them and is in charge of all the rituals which depend upon them. He
[426] manages the patrimony of the group (seeds and money) which is kept in the cowrie or millet granaries, and which he may tap, in case of necessity, in order to make interest loans to members of the society who request them. (1)

1. See S. de Ganay, "Un jardin d'essai et son autel chez les Bambara /A Sample Garden and Its Altar among the Bambara/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 17 (1947), pp. 57-63.

But this function, honorary and advantageous from many points of view, involves not only rights but, more important, duties from which the chief cannot be exemated. He must, under no circumstances, abuse his power; he can make no decision without the agreement of the members and may not act, even in the most insignificant case, without advising each and every one of them. Each person is kept up to date as regarding the smallest details concerning the general activity of the Komo and the entire age grade must be informed at the same moment. To break these rules would mean to become exposed to the greatest dangers. Just like the head of the total family whose power is far from being absolute (2), the responsible person

794 614 2. "The Mandingo fa," says Henri Labouret, in Les Manding et leur langue, "appears less free in his acts and decisions than the master of the ancient taisible fraternity. Far from being the tyrannical and strong willed autocrat whom people have frequently taken pleasure in describing, he seems to me, rather, to fulfill therole of a delegated administrator,

794 852 the Komo's blessings, the Komo's blessing is with him; let him join the men, let his light be with us" (1). The child is then presented in

1. De dyira la tye gundo la; ani komo ye dukaw mine nuofe, komo ka barka bi a fe; ka fara tyew ka, ka yele ke an ta ye.

the same way to its grandmother.

794 These acts anticipate the initiation which later will make the newborn an adolescent member of the Komo society.

794 561 [564] In each village this society is composed of all initiated men, divided into age grades, which are themselves composed, theoretically, of the men circumcised in the same year. Only the griot are not admitted. It is permissible for an individual who has not been initiated immediately after his circumcision to be admitted later if the society agrees. He will belong, regardless of his age, to the age grade with which he will have been initiated.

One age grade has precedence over the other which follows. This hierarchical order is followed strictly in daily life as well as during councils and ceremonies. To break these rules of seniority would mean to disturb the order even in the hereafter, since the Komo gathers together the sum total of both living and dead members.

794 [735] The recruitment of members varies from one region to another because of the expenses involved in the admission ceremony and in participation in the ritual. Some villagers refrain from joining because of poverty, and it also happens that some conversions to Islam are brought about by this fact.

/155/ The initiation is performed at night. The kotigi (2) presents

2. See p. 156.

to the future members, one by one, the ancestors' tools. He explains to them their origin, their history, their role, and their spiritual value. He teaches them the respect they owe the ancestors for their courage, their labors, and the technological inventions of which they were either initiators or guardians. The mask is removed from its shelter and dressed by a member; in front of the children the man who wears it unmasks himself and reveals to them the meaning of the different parts of the costume.

852 "the unknown in creation" (see pp 23 and 24), recall man's existence
304 in this state. Consequently he is conscious of the unknown and has the possibility of apprehending it. These scars act upon the tere of the child and give him at the same time strength, courage, virtue, as well as the strength to penetrate the knowledge of the invisible (1).

[842]

1. They may be redrawn at the root of the nose of an adult who has despaired of having any children, or on the thigh of a woman who wishes to be fertile. These scars, drawn at birth, are not the only ones which the Bambara wear. See S. de Ganay, "On a Form of Cicatrization among the Bambara."

852 In a blacksmith's family, the name is given near the paternal
553 forge. In the presence of all the village artisans, the kotigi shaves
326 the head of the newborn while an elder prepares seven small sticks, over each one of which he pronounces the name of an ancestor. The kotigi, whose eyes are blindfolded, pulls out in succession three sticks from the group; the third determines the name which he immediately proclaims. While the women chant, the father removes from his altar the kongobwona axe as well as the other ritual objects. The throat of a sheep is cut over all these objects while a prayer is recited. The newborn's head is rubbed first with the axe, then with shaved off hair saturated with sacrificial blood. This gesture introduces the child into the family group. Next he receives the scars of the blacksmiths.

Circumcision

304 Whereas in former times circumcision was mandatory and performed
561 upon young men (about twenty years), it is now practiced at an early age if the parents are wealthy enough to afford the expenses involved.

/180/ Because of this fact, a child of eight years may be circumcised with an adolescent of sixteen to eighteen years, whose parents are poor and have only slowly accumulated the articles necessary fot the ceremony. These two boys will belong to the same age grade (flã̀), and will be comrades (flani) all their lives, having the same rights and duties. Age thus has a restricted role in social relations.

304 The date of the circumcision alone makes a coherent whole of a
561 heterogeneous group—an age grade within /181/ which all the members owe each other friendship, confidence, and help in all phases of social and private life.

Once the operation has been decided upon, the relatives proceed

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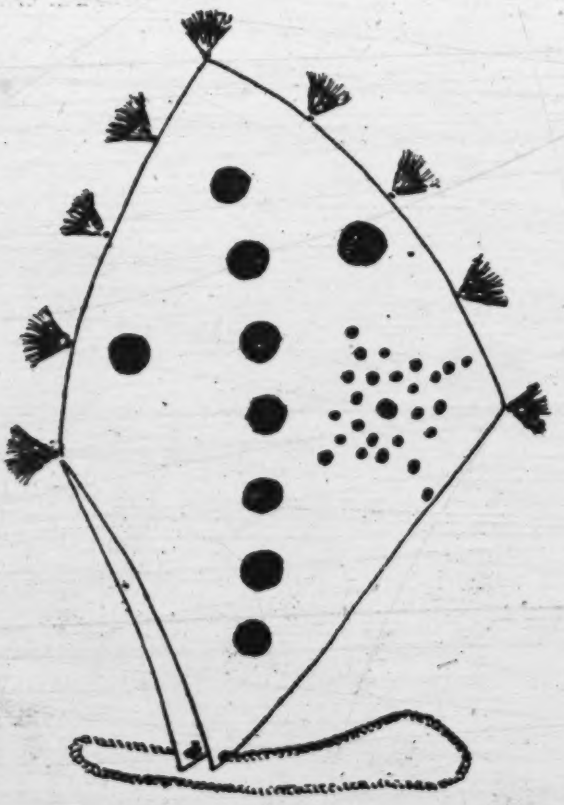

Fig. 14 — Cap of the circumcised Bambara. The nine black spots represent the child, his dya, and the cardinal points.
The design at the right represents the sumangolo, or the coming of the twelve waters of the future. (See Fig. 3)

first to make the cap worn during the seclusion. The white cloth is presented to the Niger by a uterine brother who addresses a prayer to Faro requesting permission to draw with black earth the designs that will cover it. They will protect the child who is in a state of impurity

304 recovers part of his tere. The organ is then held up by means of a
326 small apparatus, mine naw, made of a millet stem split in two in the shape of a fork.

"Circumcision is a sacrifice" (1). It is only valid if blood has run,

1. Bolokoli ye saraka ye.

and any patient who has not wet the ground with his blood is wounded on the thigh by the circumciser. The same is true for a child born
[732 without a foreskin. This detail must, moreover, be kept secret by
582] the members of his age grade, since the revelation of a malformation might prevent the individual concerned from contracting a marriage (2).

2. A woman might believe that these malformations are the sign that the man who was operated upon has not lost his wanzo, a fact which would be a definite obstacle to marriage.

/186/ When all is finished, the operator, holding the foreskins in his hand, says these words before burying them:

"We have transferred the wanzo of the circumcised child, may the tere be well" (3).

3. Ãn ye dẽ bolokole wanzo fili la, tere ka ñe.

304 After this, the circumcised boys have their caps put first on their
292 napes and foreheads representing the east-west direction, and then on
561 the sides of their heads representing the north-south direction. All their strength resides from then on in the headpiece which they will wear night and day, without removing it, during the entire period of seclusion.

304 The approach to the site of the operation is formally forbidden to
784 women and uncircumcised males. The one who might go there out of
561 curiosity "would contract the wanzo" (wanzo ba nofe, "the wanzo follows him"). Any uncircumcised boy who might break this law would have to take the consequences at the time of his own operation

304 which would be a dangerous one (1). The same rule applies to the
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> 1. The approach of the virulent wanzo of the uncircumcised boy acts upon those of the boys undergoing the operations and afflicts them in the genital organs.

enclosure, consisting of several huts, where the newly circumcised boys remain under the surveillance of the sema. The enclosure is situated at a distance of several tens of meters from the village in order to isolate the age grade. For all that touches them, such as clothing, sticks, sistrums, dishes, and refuse, with the exception of
561 the cap, is impregnated with their wanzo.
304 The newly circumcised boys receive from their parents gifts of
[431] cowrie shells and food called wanzo sababu yala, "in honor of the wanzo," to speed their recovery.
[794] On the night which precedes the sixth day after the operation, a day called daworo, the children are initiated to the Komo (2).

> 2. See p. 203.

The following day, the sema leads them to the edge of the river, where they wash their wounds for the first time. This act, which brings about direct intervention of the element in which Faro lives, has moreover a social meaning: it consecrates the age grade and from this moment on, the children belong for the rest of their lives to the same flã, exchanging jokes and insults which are suitable between senãnku (3). It must be noted that this very simple act of communal

> 3. See p. 119.

ablution constitutes the inauguration of an age grade of circumcised boys and sets off from that moment all the rights and obligations its members will have toward each other.

A meal, eaten in common and accompanied by songs and dances, ends the ceremonies of the daworo. Hereafter the ablutions are repeated daily until the wounds are healed.

304 /187/ On the last day, all that has been in contact with the newly
561 circumcised boys is gathered together at a crossroad near the enclosure.
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Sistrums, sticks, mats, as well as the wood from the huts and the refuse that has been carefully swept up, are put in a pile which is ignited. Each circumcised boy jumps over the fire three times and then runs to his home without looking back. In this way he finally loses the rest of the wanzo which he has kept after the operation. Only his cap is brought back and given his mother who keeps it until her death. On the next day, after putting on new clothes the boy is taught what he himself is in the following words: "the person is yo and yo is the person (1)" and in the circumstances of creation. He is

1. Ma ye yo ye, yo ye ma yè.
On yo see pp. 18-26.

then admitted completely into the society of the male adults of his village.

Circumcision has a profound effect upon the person. At this moment, the child loses the physical support of the female sex which is the foreskin; he becomes a man (vir) ready to fulfill his role of a male capable of reproducing. Moreover, he "throws off his wanzo" which escapes from the body at the moment of the operation (2). In his

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2. Wanzo file la. The wearing of clothing and ornaments assumes great importance in the loss of the wanzo. Among the Bozo, where the children are circumcised very young, they are not considered to have lost their wanzo until the moment these clothes are given to them.

leap above the fire this force joins, in the altars and the mask of the ndomo, the forces of both the uncircumcised and the circumcised of the preceding years (3).

3. See p. 227.

At the same time the circumcised boy improves his tere, for this latter force, diminished by the bloody operation, increases at the moment when the child dons his new clothing. Until his circumcision, the child only performed minor tasks; after circumcision he is considered a male adult and officially admitted to the rituals and labors of the community.

*173 several occasions and suspected the truth; so he used a trick. He pretended to take a bath and, while the water was running out, looked outside. He saw the child beneath the gutter and struck him with his iron-tipped stick.

Ngolo was terrified and ran off to tell his story to Danté Balo. The good woman interceded with Mamari and persuaded him to relent. Nevertheless, Mamari decided to separate from his favorite and summoned Kolé, the leader of the sofa, to whom he entrusted the child, saying: "Here's a bad boy; don't be afraid to make him work hard."

One day, when he had taken the bila-koro (1) in his

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1. A young boy old enough to be circumcised and wearing a piece of cloth called bila between his legs, instead of trousers.

charge to the field to cut fodder, Kolé sat down in a place called Sirani-n-tu (lit., forest of the little baobab tree) after the small baobab tree which grew there in the middle of a grove. The spirit of the place, who lived in the baobab tree, appeared to Kolé and said: "If you come tomorrow to this same spot and if you bring me a white ram, a white rooster and some rice, I will make it possible for you to become king of Ségou." Now Ngolo, who was wandering about nearby, had seen and heard everything. When he returned to Ségou he ran weeping to Danté Balo; when she asked what was the matter, he answered that a spirit had threatened to kill him unless he sacrificed a white ram, a white rooster and some rice. "Ah well," she said, "Cheer up, here's a white rooster and some rice, and you can take the ram from the master's flock. If anyone is surprised at seeing you with a ram, just say that I gave it to you." He followed her advice and arrived on time at the rendezvous, which Kolé, on the other hand, had forgotten.

After killing the rooster and the ram, in accordance with the rites with which he was familiar, and offering the rice, Ngolo saw the genie appear, while a distant voice said: "Ah, it's you, friend Kolé (2), I'm glad to see you obey my orders and, in return,

2. It is interesting to note that the genie

592 this well-built structure in the midst of the inextricable maze
[712] of surrounding huts which were themselves surrounded by a solid wall of native masonry.

[565] The people of a single household are classed in three categories: free men (woro-u), members of castes (nya-maka-la), and slaves (dyon'-u).

596 The freemen. Within the family, free persons are:
●561 the men (tye-u), i.e., circumcised males; the moso-u, excised women; the den'-u, children of both sexes.
601 In accordance with their influence (faya) in the family, the men are called koro-u, old men, elders, or kamalen'-u, young masters. Among the old men the bina (uncles), brothers of the fa, hold the preponderant position; they form a kind of limited family council and generally work for the welfare of the community under the direction of the fa.

Among the women the following distinctions are made: the mothers, i.e., women under the control of a husband and who are actually mothers of children, ba-u; old women, moso-koro-u; grandmothers, mama-u; and finally unmarried girls, moso-de-u.

All children are called de unless they are specifically identified as de-n-ke, "boy," or de-moso or deni, "girl."

601 Furthermore, every male with any influence (faya) in the family, no matter to what extent, is called fa (1): [162]

> 1. In one way or another, therefore, every male is fa, since he exercises or will one day exercise faya. The word fa is jokingly applied even to very young boys just as ba is applied to little girls. These words may be used just like our familiar expressions when we say "Father X" or "Mother X" with no reference intended to any real state of fatherhood or motherhood.
>
> In any case, the words fa and ba are also used as terms of respect, just as we

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596 arise on the subject of legitimacy. During the fa's lifetime,
614 his authority imposes whatever solution pleases him, but when
578 he is gone, the disputes involving status are all the more violent for having been suppressed or evaded for so long.

These disputes gain strength also from the difference in
614 rank which the members have within the community. The
596 totality of prerogatives of all kinds which raise the fa above all others constitutes a kind of superior dignity whose essence is the omnipotence covered by the word faya, from which came the title fa [174] (master, lord). It is in reference to the faya that the members of the community are ranked.

[562] Only male members can advance claims to the faya, and because they can do this, they can all call themselves fa. On the other hand, women can never hold this authority; they are fantan'-u, "powerless."

Among the fa-u there are distinctions based on degree of
596 kinship and on age; those most closely related to the fa will be
614 the first to receive the honors about to be described. Male
601 descendants in the first degree form a sort of senate of which
561 the eldest is a kind of president-by-birth; he is truly the fa, the actual representative of the deceased. The one immediately following him by rank in terms of age is his syere (follower), his heir presumptive at the head of the community. The other senators, usually brothers of the fa, are uncles (bina-u) to the descendants of the second degree and their children. By reason of the authority associated with the position of bina-u in the community, this kinship term has come to be a title of respect which is bestowed on men toward whom one wishes to show particular esteem (1). Because of their age,

1. It is worthy of note that in Uncle Tom's Cabin, Miss Stowe explains that among the slaves in America the word "uncle" had precisely this meaning as a title of respect and honor.

all the senators of the community are commonly called koro-u, "the elders," and the fa is first among them.

561 596 614 Among the rest of the men in the community, one distinguishes those who, being circumcised, are married and even fathers of families or who are about to become one or the other; these men are called kamalen'-u, literally, "the young masters." Finally there are the uncircumcised: first, the adolescent boys called soli-ma-u, "people of the soli," that is to say, who will soon be circumcised; the others are small boys (den-tye-u).

596 614 The fa, his election and installation. The personage in the community on whom all attention is concentrated is the fa.

Even if during the life of the fa his successor is known, it does not always happen that the replacement will follow as was intended. [175]

In the first place, the designated heir is free to refuse the faya for any reason he pleases, including solely that of personal convenience. The chronicle of Ségou relates that Biton's son, who lived at Oftala, refused the faya because of the excesses of the "people of Ségou."

More often, however, the faya eludes claimants for two main reasons.

No one can become fa if he does not belong to the community. Hence, anyone who ceases to be a member of the community, whether voluntarily or not, cannot attain the faya. One may cease to belong to the community either in fact or by law. The former condition would include prolonged absence, enslavement, settling abroad without hope of return, etc. This brings about a kind of suspension of the exercise of rights, but not their abrogation. On the other hand, when the member expressly renounces the community, or when he is excluded by the decision of the fa (1) and the senate, he is

1. So it was that Ma-n-son decreed that his brothers Séri and Ba were excluded from the faya, because they merely looked on as spectators when he was struggling with Nyana-n-koro and had thus shown themselves hostile to the fa.

596 and property. On the other hand, he also has duties toward
614 them, for it is the essence of the institution to support its members.

561 All the acts of the fa, even the arbitrary ones, are,
578 according to law, under the control of the senate. It should
596 not be forgotten that the members of the community are di-
614 vided into two hostile groups: that of the "elders," which includes the fa, and that of the "young masters." The fa could hardly [184] keep the common property all to himself, so he shares it more or less as he pleases, and naturally, the elders are among the most generously treated. The young men seldom get any such favors, hence their resentment against the elders, due largely to envy of their favored position.

596 It is customary for a fa when he becomes the head of a
614 patriarchy to leave the management of his own community to his eldest son (1). This separation of interests is essential in

[554 492]

1. The eldest son, or better, the first-born son, thus occupies a privileged position, and in Kaarta he is usually provided with a white horse to make him conspicuous. See p. 122 about the death of 98 first-born sons mounted on white horses.

order to prevent the fa from despoiling the patriarchy to benefit his own community. The history of these countries shows how often this rule is broken by ambitious men who hope to profit by the general confusion to build up a considerable fortune. Among both the elders and the young men they find willing accomplices, and as their power increases, they extend their extortions. There are many signs, however, of the fragility of their despotism, which they themselves recognize. They usually, therefore, take pains to settle the question of succession in advance hoping to avoid the collapse of their achievements. Wasted effort! Custom, which they have ignored, regains its rights when they die and often does so during their lifetime. This is a logical explanation of the fact that

421 the loan but something in addition, and he will always show
596 his gratitude for it. If the repayment drags on and on, as
614 usually happens, the community does not withdraw his right to the debt, which is never lost; it watches for a turn for the better in the debtor's affairs, meddles in his business, and plagues his widows and children for all it can get from them after his death. The rapacity of the community uses the old debt as an excuse for seizing everything left by the debtor.

466 Every member of the community, strictly speaking, is
596 at the service of the community and must therefore cooperate
614 to assure its prosperity. If he cannot work himself, or does not wish to, in the fields, for instance, he must provide a substitute in the person of one of his children or his own slaves. To the extent that he cannot find the means to exempt himself, [186] he is treated as one of the "poor" and is forced to work.

166 It is easy to understand that the young men often leave to make their fortunes elsewhere in order to escape a power that is so suspicious, troublesome and all-pervading. Some of them never return, either because they have managed to create an independent life for themselves, or because they are more comfortable at a safe distance from their authoritarian elders. More often, however, the young man, having founded an independent family far away, keeps in close touch with his community and watches developments there in case he may one day be able to profit from them.

578 The young men who stay at home form a party of intrigue
561 which is forever at war with the fa and the senate. Their op-
885 position weakens, however, as they approach the age at which they too will participate in the faya to which they aspire. Gradually, as one changes from kamalen' to bina, he acquires the same niggling authoritarianism which then arouses the animosity of the new kamalen'-u.

562 In concluding this study of the members of the commun-
583 ity, the situation of girls remains to be discussed. Like the boys, they belong completely to the community, which, as a result, has the right to make as much profit out of them as possible. So, since exogamy is the rule, the community cedes the girl in usufruct to whoever pays the bride price, and because she will

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881 being born; bolo-ko literally means "affair involving birth."

etymologically mean "birth."

Having entered the family through physical birth, a child enters a new phase of his life through the spiritual birth represented by the soli. Through this rite, a child in fact ceases to belong to sexless childhood and becomes: the boy, a man; the girl, a woman. Let us look at the stages of this change of status which is truly the principal event of a native's life.

857 Until he is about seven years old, a small boy lives in daily contact with his mother, only slipping away, as time goes on, to play nearby with his friends.

During this period, one can already observe the influence [235] of the native milieu on the development of his young soul. He has watched cult and magic practices, and he too plays at being a magician to kill or capture rats, lizards, and other small animals for his little feasts. He collects roots with simulated rites and attaches them to his toy bow so as to ensure the success of his hunting, believing that he has attracted a spirit by promising an offering of the blood of his victims. He is already a little hunter, seeking mysterious procedures through which game can be and ought to be put at his mercy without danger to himself.

881 Around the age of seven, he is thinking about the crucial
794 act of his life, the soli, one of whose rites is that of circumcision.

Observance of the soli, complete with public circumcision and preceded and followed by membership in a brotherhood, is not absolutely indispensable. When, by reason of circumstances, a child lives in an isolated situation, he undergoes the soli within the family circle, without fuss, and this in no way lessens the validity of the act.

881 There is no doubt, however, that nothing but absolute
794 necessity will make a Bambara do this; he loathes such wretched
561 economy, which in any case seems inappropriate to such an im-
571 portant occasion (1). On the contrary, he loves to take part in

1. Besides, since no exact age limit is

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imposed and since there may be as much as six or seven years' difference in age between the oldest and youngest children participating in the same soli, it is obviously possible for a candidate to arrange to be included at some point within this range of ages so as not to be an isolated case.

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a noisy demonstration and to share in all of the rejoicing the brotherhoods provide for their members. This is by no means the least of the reasons for the spread of these brotherhoods, to which the n-Tomo (2) is really the front door, since no one is

2. n-Tomo is the term used in the Ségou area; in Kaarta the term n-Tori is used.

admitted to a brotherhood unless he is soli-ma, and the specific final object of the n-Tomo is the soli.

n-Tomo

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The n-Tomo is an association which, in preparation for the soli, bands together boys (3) of about seven to fourteen years

3. Little girls have no organized society to prepare them for the soli, but they have agreements among themselves and, in addition, are chosen as n-golo-moso-u by the n-Tomo-den'-u.

Each [236] n-Tomo normally includes all the boys due to be circumcised, without distinction by race or rank. Each member is called n-Tomo-den'; the eldest is the leader or n-Tomo-tigi, and he is assisted by a syere or "follower." New members are received every year at the time of the annual festival, and they must pay an entrance fee (a chicken) and a few cowries

561 and take an oath of secrecy. The boy leaves the n-Tomo
857 after the soli. Girls are not admitted.
881 The n-Tomo-tigi and his syere organize the association so as to assure it some property which in principle is collective property. Through common abuse, however, they are the primary if not the sole beneficiaries of it. They persuade their comrades to cultivate a field whose produce will provide the food for their club feasts. The entrance fee is augmented by force, spontaneously or at the order of the n-Tomo-tigi: gifts, collections, theft, hunting, fishing, etc.; in short, anything may be collected by individual or collective effort to form a kind of common treasury.

857 There is no collectivity, however, without its spiritual
793 patron. The n-Tomo meets out-of-doors, at the foot of a tree (1) believed to be the chosen home of a genie-protector.

1. The name "n-Tomo" comes from this. It has been thought that the term was simply the name of the tree where the genie-protector lives and that it was the tree which the Bambara call "n-Tomo." If this were true, why should people in Kaarta use the term "n-Tori" when the tree called n-Tomo does not change its name? It has been suggested that n-Tori is another word meaning "toad" and came from the peculiar "cry" characteristic of the society.

It is my belief that the two terms, "n-Tomo" and "n-Tori" designate the same grouping in different regions and have one and the same meaning: meeting, assembly.

The n-Tomo-tigi is the high priest of this genie; as such he receives the oaths of the neophytes and has a certain degree of authority over the whole band, which enables him to punish any misdeed committed by a n-Tomo-den'. He does not hesitate to use corporal punishment.

881 group is called kule. In the same way, the boys go about in a group headed by the sema-tye, called masa (king), followed by the masa-ma-kono, the masa-ma-kono-segere, etc.

In this way, the whole country learns which boys and girls have completed the soli.

The Fla-n-ton'

● 561 572 575 Those who have belonged to the same n-Tomo-ya and have gone through the soli together remain bound together for life; they are fula-ni ("peers," "twins") because they were born on the same day to sexual and social life. Wherever they may be and whatever their respective rank, two fula-ni consider themselves equals even if one of them is a chief and the other a slave; the latter in particular has the right to speak his mind without fear (1). Theoretically, therefore, the fula-ni is the friend on

1. See in Chapter 7, "The Man with Three Braids." [Not translated.]

whom one may safely rely, and he is usually a member of the council, small but very powerful, which every fa likes to have around. It is to him that the fa confides his troubles, his joys, his plans, and his personal affairs. He is present at all the celebrations and mourning of the family. On serious or important occasions, he represents his friend who often entrusts him with the supervision of his household during an absence and appoints him guardian or trustee of his children after his death. He is a brother who may be loved more than agnate or uterine brothers. At the same time the fulani-ya does not necessarily produce a type of brotherhood analogous to that brought about by the blood pact. Rather, it engenders a kind of mutual assistance which is strengthened by the organization called fla-n-ton', "assemblage of people of the same age," i.e., those [illegible]rn" at the same soli.

The young people from the same soli form a fla-m-bolo, literally, a band of persons of the same age.

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575 A fla-n-ton' usually includes the young people from three consecutive soli, so it is an assemblage of three fla-m-bolo. Thus, Bambara society is composed of a certain number of fla-n-ton', and all the people are distributed among them, from the most recent tye-kura (new men) to the tye-koro (elders) who are the most advanced in age, [249] Since the women also have their fla-n-ton', it is reasonable to say, from a certain point of view, that the soli is the basis of life and of the social organization.

571 Each fla-n-ton' is independent, but it maintains the best of relations with its immediate neighbors, the one preceding it, the one following it, and the one of the women of the same soli. Thus, the fla-n-ton' have a certain solidarity among them, which is shown by the custom of each fla-n-ton' honoring its immediate neighbors by offering them some of the food from its corporate meals. It should be noted, also, that whenever discord arises within a fla-n-ton', the neighboring fla-n-ton' intervene to make peace; a special arbiter may even be chosen to smooth out the difficulties involved in such an affair (1).

1. In this connection, note the difficulties between the ton' of Kassoum and Biton as reported in the chronicle of Ségou above.

Wherever he goes, a Bambara will look up people of his own age, i.e., those who went through the soli at the same time. He can always count on their friendly welcome and practical help.

In each fla-n-ton' there is a chief, ton-tigi, chosen in various ways depending on the place and the people. He may be the son of a notable; he may be a house slave. A syere (follower) assists him or replaces him. A dyala-tige, or assigner of shares, has the function of enforcing discipline and distributing the food at the group banquets; this is usually a house slave. Finally, a ton-dyeli serves as general factotum and herald; a person of caste has this role. From the point of view of the

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575 association, each fula-ni is a ton'-den'.

The bachelors and some of the married men regard the fla-n-ton' simply as a means of having a good time in the company of boon companions. Anything brought by an individual member goes to swell the common fund which is most often used to organize feasts and drinking bouts. At these banquets, it is customary to comply with rules which appear curious at first sight and which must be obeyed unless the member wants to pay a fine into the common fund. Thus, anyone who acts on his own prior to or contrary to an order from the ton-tigi, anyone who comes or leaves, blows his nose, [250] spits, sneezes, and so on, without permission, is fined. Aside from the profit to the common fund, the procedure has its uses in making the ton-den' amenable to discipline.

In principle, the treasury of the fla-n-ton' is supposed to be used only to succor poor, embarrassed, or unfortunate members, who are expected to repay with interest insofar as they are able to do so. In theory, also, all of the ton-den' can count on moral and material aid from their fla-ni whenever there is need for it. It goes without saying that this fine spirit of altruism is rarely put into practice.

The fact of the matter is that the young masters (kamale-u) make use of the organization to resist the omnipotence of the elders (koro-u); malcontents of all sorts take refuge in it; adventurers find it useful in promoting their schemes. We shall see how the two most powerful Bambara empires were built on the fla-n-ton'.

2. General Considerations Concerning the Brotherhoods

Origin of the Brotherhoods

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794 There is no reason to suppose that the Bambara brotherhoods are not purely native institutions; similar organizations are to be found all over Africa, particularly in areas untouched by Moslem influence. All of them follow similar principles made manifest in ways characteristic of African occultism.

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794 There is no doubt, however, that in the case of the Bambara with whom we are here concerned this native foundation

173 Their people, [290] except for the payment of required tribute,
631 lived as they pleased and followed their own customs as long as the latter did not offend the dominant clan.

2. Clan of the "People of Ségou"

Development of the Fla-n-ton' of Ségou-koro

575 According to the chronicle cited earlier, the origin of the
561 clan of Ségou must be attributed to the development of a fla-n-ton'.

Those persons who have undergone the rite of soli together are united in a fla-n-bolo (band of peers); the fla-n-bolo of three consecutive soli form a fla-n-ton' (assemblage of peers). The members call themselves ton'-den' in relation to the association, and fla-ni in relation to one another.

In each fla-n-ton' there is a ton'-tigi (head of the assemblage) elected by the ton' den', who is just as likely to be a wolo-su (slave born in the house) as the son of a notable; a dyala-tigi (distributor), likewise elected by the ton'-den', is especially charged with the distribution of food for the group's banquets and with the enforcement of regulations; a ton' dyeli is a kind of beadle appointed by the ton'-tigi who has him make preparations for meetings, assemble the members, announce orders, etc., and he is usually a young person of caste. There are people of all races and of all ranks in the fla-n-ton', and in the association there is theoretically, complete equality among them. Indeed, this equality explains the term fla-ni-u (peers) which they use among themselves.

In principle the aim of the fla-n-ton' (1) is to establish

1. As we have noted, there are fla-n-ton' for women as well as for men, but we are not considering them here; their role is insignificant from the present point of view.

575 561 a sense of solidarity among the ton'-den'. In reality, the bachelor ton'-den' are principally concerned with amassing as much food as possible for the sole purpose of treating themselves to copious and merry banquets from time to time; for this purpose, all means are acceptable. Each member brings to the group whatever he can lay his hands on; in addition, the society assesses its members for contributions to swell the common fund. [291] First, there are the entrance fees and assessments in kind, particularly of grain. Then there are fines for infractions of the rules, involving penalties whose purpose is simply the enrichment of the group's treasury. At certain meetings, for instance, the most ordinary acts may not be performed unless permission has been given by the ton'-tigi or the dyala-tigi. A member who squats, rises, speaks, sneezes, or laughs before being authorized to do so is fined. Finally, the society goes on organized hunts, and the game thus acquired is distributed among the members on the basis of strict equality.

[527] Ordinarily the ton'-den' meet twice a week, on Monday and Thursday; these are the free days allotted to the poor people (fantan'-u), that is, people who are wholly under control.

The ton'-tigi can make no important decision without the prior advice and agreement of the ton'-den', but this does not mean that his role is negligible. His initiative determines the orientation of acts, and he later sees to their execution. Therefore, if he is a clever man, he actually has almost sole command over an organization capable of exerting powerful pressure on the native milieu, which by nature is amorphous, because a fla-n-ton' is not an isolated group. It is linked with the one that preceded it and the one immediately following it by a kind of solidarity, so that native society, from this point of view, is made up of an uninterrupted series of fla-n-ton' closely bound to each other, since the same chain of relationship prevails for women and since every male fla-n-ton' has a brotherhood relationship with the corresponding female fla-n-ton'.

[627] If a difference arises between members of the same fla-n-ton', the "elders" of the preceding fla-n-ton', i.e., the one immediately older, intervene as conciliators to settle the quarrel.

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628 When differences arise between fla-n-ton', an arbitrator is chosen by these fla-n-ton'; in some regions, there is even an arbitrator designated in advance.

Among all these fla-n-ton' the most conspicuous is the one having the largest number of young bachelors known as "the young masters" (kamalen'-u). Being much given to idleness, the kamalen'-u are troublemakers and rebels who seek all the [292] material pleasures and devote their talents to opposing the fa, the bina, and those who, as masters of the community, impose on the young the whole weight of an authority which is absolute and often niggling.

This explanation makes it plain that the post of ton'-tigi is no sinecure. In order to maintain his role honorably, the ton'-tigi must be capable of exerting his authority in subtle and shrewd ways, for the ton'-den' are touchy and undisciplined, and they are quick to claim the equality which is the basis of their association, even to the point of egalitarian mania or egalitarianism. Therefore, it is interesting to note that the regulations, fantastic at first glance, which inflict penalties for performing the most trivial acts are actually very effective; they correct in fun, but they represent a kind of restraint that encourages the development of discipline. Breaking with ordinary life, they tend through repetition to form habits which taken together make
[661] up what we call esprit de corps. In any event, the development which we are about to describe shows conclusively that to maintain and conserve his power the ton'-tigi must exert authority by dissimulation, by persuading those most easily offended that he is subordinating his own acts to their wishes and at the same time appearing to the faint-hearted as an imperious and audacious leader. Furthermore, he must render service to everyone and know how to turn projects and adventures, even the riskiest, into profit for the community.

Since he is the target of the hostility of the elders, who often suffer from the activities of the ton'-den', and since he is constantly envied by some of these same ton'-den' for his success, he acquires the kind of experience which makes him a crafty and sly politician, completely devoid of scruples.

*173 We shall see how Mamari (called Biton) Kouloubali managed to prevail over the tyrannical egalitarianism of the

608 his ally had to try to ransom him. A sénanku often serves as inter-
621 mediary in arranging marriages, in land claims, in the collection of
648 debts. He is rewarded by gifts. He has the power to stop quarrels and to oppose acts of rage and violence by the man whose sénanku he is, no matter what his rank and no matter how important the decisions in question are. The sénanku of a Fama could prevent his declaring war or condemning to death one of his subjects. Moreover, he has certain limited privileges over his ally's possessions. (He may appropriate unimportant objects, food, and even sums of money.) Finally, he recruits the labor force which his ally may need.

c. Age Classes. -- But though these different ties exercise an
621 important influence on the political, social, and religious life of the
571 community they are generally too broad and too lax to permit organiza-
561 tion of a work community. In fact, we have seen how a large village may be formed of different communities relatively independent of each other, despite the authority of the founding community's fa. On the level of the canton, the geographical dispersion does not permit the Fama to intervene personally in the organization of the work community. The latter is founded essentially on the system of relations of the age classes.

561 From infancy until circumcision for the boys, until excision for the girls, the young Bambara belongs to a hierarchic society which prepares him or her for this ceremony and which provides an education complementary to that received in the family. Within this association all the children are divided into age classes: boys up to six years of age are bilakoro-dogomani (bila = short pants), from 6 to 10 years they are bilakoro-dogoma, from 10 to about 15 years, bilakoro-koroba. Similarly, the girls are, successively: sunkiri-dogomani, sunkuru-dogoma, and sunkuru-koroba. Each age class has a chief: ton-tigi for the boys, musso-tigi for the girls; each office is doubled by a deputy (syere). There is also a treasurer and a ton-dyeli who is the griot of the ton. All are elected by members of the society. A Bambara will be influenced all his life by his membership in a certain age class which groups all the children who underwent circumcision at the same time. In fact, up to the moment of circumcision the child's personality is not yet distinct. We have seen before how small children were

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considered as being in the same category as their grandparents; they are said to belong to the same age class.

561 857 [57] The relations between boys and girls before the ceremonies of circumcision and excision are governed by a sort of non-consummated marriage uniting the children of the different ton.

The little girl (ton-musso) must take care of the clothes and household of her infant husband (tontié); later she must decorate his house with designs he tells her to make. In return, her husband will give her gifts and will help cultivate her parents' field. When the girl marries in earnest, her tontié must himself give her to her husband. Throughout this false marriage, the young girl's virginity must be respected, and her tontié is held responsible for it.

561 Before their circumcision, all the children are affiliated according to their age classes to the brotherhood of the n'Tomo (see the chapter on religion). The oldest of the group will be the head of his class; all the little chiefs are subjects of the chief of the oldest group: the n'tomo-tigi and to his deputy, the n'tomo-tigi-syere. The brotherhood prepares the children for the circumcision initiation; it regulates the common work, the religious ceremonies, and the celebrations. It settles disputes that may arise between members.

561 796 The different ceremonies of the n'Tomo, which take place each year after the harvest, have been described by Monteil (1) and by

1. Monteil, Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta [The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta].

Tauxier (2). They include offerings, sacrifices to the guardian spirit,

2. Tauxier, La religion bambara [The Bambara Religion].

a communion, and masked dances followed by a lash from the ritual whip, which marks the definitive acceptance of the neophytes.

561 Later, those who have belonged to the same n'tomoya and who have undergone the soli together are united for life. They are fulani, that is to say, twins (they are born the same day to the sexual, social,

561 and religious life). The young men of the same soli form what is called a flambolo. Three consecutive classes of flambolo form a flanton. The women have a parallel organization. Each fulani is a ton-den (child of the ton), with a corresponding association.

561 241 476 The association's role, apart from the seasonal celebrations and the copious feasts, accompanied by a great deal of drinking, is that of a mutual aid society and of a veritable village work cooperative. It is organized, administered, and articulated with a view to the agricultural work. The chief, kariku, expedites current business, with the assistance of a syere (witness, deputy). He has a treasurer who receives offerings and makes payments, the femmaraba (he who preserves things), plus an honorary president and an adviser, chosen from among the notables and delegated by them; he must supervise the society and orient its activities.

This social organism rests, in the last analysis, on the exchanges of services initiated and supported by the kariku. He sees to it that help is forthcoming to a man making the customary work payments in the fields of his parents-in-law or future parents-in-law (in exchange for food and drink furnished by the parents-in-law to these ton-den). In like manner, a farmer asks the kariku for help in clearing a field of brush. This request is made through an intermediary or a senanku who [58] accompanies the request with ten kola nuts. The chief accepts the present and calls his council into session to study the affair technically and to fix the salary. The same procedure is followed for the winter weeding, which calls for rapid completion, as well as for building dams, irrigating canals, paths, roads suitable for carting, etc.

[431] [824]

An analogous system exists for the female kari, for sowing the crops as well as for gathering the harvest, mutual domestic aid, etc. The two groups collaborate for the seasonal celebrations.

643 d. The Fama. -- We see that the canton is a grouping formed under the authority and influence of a dominant family. Its unity is determined by political, social, and religious laws which regulate it. The fa or head of the dominant family becomes the Fama, that is,the patriarch, chief of the canton. He then often renounces the administration of the faya, which he turns over to his second (syere),

562 When the husband dies, the wives are considered the principal
438 wealth of the heir. Among certain Bambara, the wives are divided
768 among the brothers; the eldest brother chooses and then has the other
587 brothers choose in order of age. Among others, the heritage goes to the children who must ally themselves with their father's wives. The wives who do not want to remain with the heir have the option of returning to their families, providing the settlement is returned.

428 The wife may have personal property given to her by her
562 parents at the time of marriage. Among certain Bambara, the father of the bride must give her the settlement paid by the husband, and this becomes her personal property. When a widow dies, all of her goods go to her eldest son; if there is no son, half of her goods goes to her daughters, and the other half is divided among her father, her mother, and her brother. When a married woman dies without children, her goods are divided between her husband and her father; if she no longer has her father, half goes to her husband and the other half to her brothers and sisters.

On the other hand, we have seen how a woman may inherit all of the wealth of a family head, and even of a chief, in default of male heirs, and the Mali empire had a woman Keïta at its head, daughter of Naré, fa Maghan.

562 A woman must not take part in any political discussion or
662 demonstration, which does not mean that her role in these matters is nil. All the history of Mali is full of palace intrigues which reach their acute stage at the moment of a Fama's death and of the election of a new chief. It is at this moment that the women knew how to throw into the balance all the weight of their family's power to determine the new election.

562 Finally, we have seen that in a fashion parallel to the male
561 brotherhoods and societies, the women were organized into powerful
575 hierarchical societies according to their age classes and their degree of initiation. These societies, where men do not enter, are still imperfectly known, but they are at least as formidable as the male brotherhoods.

562 The woman must pound the millet, draw water, and carry out all the household chores, but when the man kills an animal, the meat belongs to the wife, and the man must accept in turn what she will give him.

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714 The society of n'Domo has the task of preparing children for circumcision; the wanzo of the child liberated by the operation goes in the mask of the n'Domo.

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304 Formerly, circumcision took place between 18 and 20 years of age, and the circumcised had to bear arms the following year. At present, the children are circumcised between 8 and 16 years of age, but all those of the same promotion are considered to belong to [561] the same age class and are flani [sic] (twins) all their lives.

The ritual of circumcision has been described many times, in particular by Tauxier and G. Dieterlen. Therefore we will only report the essential phases.

The ceremony takes place during the dry season, in bountiful years after the harvest. The appearance of the constellation "Sigi-lolo" is watched for at a certain point in the sky, and when it is very brilliant, the date is fixed. The operation cannot take place except every three years.

The parents prepare for the ceremony long in advance: they make the child a bonnet of white cloth which they present to the Niger, and they make the signs representing the person of the child with earth from the river. Some days before the operation, the child enters into a period of seclusion; he is placed under the protection of the purifying light of Faro and receives gifts (cowries, food ....).

When the day arrives, his hair is shaved off. His mother washes his shaft with water in which an iron axe has been soaked, then has him eat a plate of rice.

The blacksmith prepares his knife, boloko kumba moru; which is enclosed in an iron sheath, this knife represents the circumcised and the prepuce which will be taken from him. The priest washes the handle and, symbolically, the penis. Then with coal or with millet paste he traces the blade with ritual designs symbolizing the three first circumcised men, the four first excised women, and the bird which is the avatar of the eight ancestral blacksmiths. Next, he ties the prepuce with a small cord (drawn on the middle of the blade) and places it on the pembelé. The cutting knife is hit with a small block of wood, and the blacksmith then traces the scarifications on the shaft. The circumcised bleed in a circle on the ground, in individual holes [92] dug between their legs. They thus deliver the wanzo to the impure earth, while the circumciser recites the prayers. Then they apply a dressing of bloody earth to the wound,

869 794 778 In addition to wearing the costume, which is white (n'tomo djé) or yellow, black, etc. (n'tomo fign), the boy who dances the dance of the genie hides his face in a frightful wooden mask on top of which are five, seven, and sometimes eight horns.

869 794 561 The n'tomo injects a whole organization into the world of children. They quite naturally divide themselves into small groups, each corresponding to a circumcision that is to take

[291 293]

Child wearing the loincloth called yaba.

place, and are thus all of the same age, born in the same year, or very nearly so. The member of each group who is the oldest -- be it by only one day -- becomes its head, and all the younger heads obey the head of the oldest group, the n'tomotigi, and his aide, the n'tomotigi siéré (1), who is drawn from

1. Siéré, "aide," "deputy."

the group which will be circumcised after that

869 of the n'tomotigi. /93/

794 These two children prepare the hunts for rats and lizards, or-
561 ganize the games and supervise them, and if an offence is committed by the band, it is up to them to discover the culprit. When quarrels, arguments, and fights arise among the children, they intervene, judge each case, and, if the matter is worth the trouble, the mischief-maker, or the one who is declared responsible, is severely beaten. All this

[778]

Mask of the n'tomo, the children's fetish.

produces unity within the various groups and prevents them from coming to blows at every moment.

The little girls also have an organization into groups; but it lacks cohesion; it would have to be religious in nature, since religion is the basis of all unity in the Bambara country. Only at the time of excision does all this change, and then there is real cohesion among them.

796 Every year children sacrifice to the n'tomo genie through the
857 mediation of their head, the n'tomotigi. The day of the sacrifice is a day of great rejoicing which ends in flagellation. The material for

583 584 of d'lo, or millet beer. The head of the village and his council, friends, and the to-n-déou, or members of the association of the fla-n-to (1), go at once to pay their respects to the happy father and

561 575

1. The association of the fla-n-to, with a to-n-tigi at its head, is made up of several groups of to-n-déou, or members of the association. Every group corresponds to a circumcision. /sic/ When many are circumcised at the same time, they form a group, but if there are only one, two, or three, they join the group of those circumcised at the preceding occasion. The to-n-dé invites to his betrothal and his wedding the members of his group, who were circumcised with him, and the members of the older groups. As to the younger groups, he does not invite them. The women also form an association of fla-n-to similar to that of the men but separate from it. The woman who is at the head of the association, usually the oldest in the village, is called to-n-tigi, or massa fama, queen, and the to-n-dé mouso (the to-n-dé women) call her m'ba, mother. They are summoned only to the wedding.

583 584 to tell the girl that her betrothal is being celebrated and cannot henceforth be broken without a grave and important reason. Soon the b'lon of /sic/ the entry hut and the inner court are full of crouching men who drink d'lo, or millet beer, and soon ramble in their talk. And